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Notes of the Month.

On the signing of the Treaty of Peace the following telegram was dispatched in the name of the above Church to His Majesty King George:—"We, the members of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, welcome with devout thankfulness the formal ratification of a victorious Peace, and fervently pray that your Gracious Majesty may speedily see the consummation in the widening good of mankind and in the enhanced welfare and progress of the Empire which you so conspicuously serve.—ALFRED TURNER, *Moderator*, GEORGE J. SLIPPER, *Clerk*." The following reply was received:—"The Moderator, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. I am commanded to express His Majesty's best thanks to the members of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland for their loyal assurances. His Majesty heartily reciprocates their hopes for the enhanced welfare and progress of the Empire.—STAMFORDHAM."

We would draw the attention of our readers to the article in this issue entitled "Practical Applications of our Unitarian Faith," by the Rev. Dr. Mellone. *The Inquirer*, to which paper we are indebted for the article, announces it as an address given at a public meeting in Essex Hall on the 11th June, but including three short paragraphs omitted in the delivery. The address has a special interest for us here in the North of Ireland. It will be remembered that at our annual meetings held June last the Rev. Dr. Mellone delivered an address entitled "The Place of the Church in Human Life." As it was delivered in our midst the address was one of the most powerful to which we have been privileged to listen. It was matter for regret that we had not a verbatim report to give to our readers, and so we are glad of the opportunity to reproduce the Essex Hall address, which will quite call to our minds all that Dr. Mellone said to us in Belfast.

* *

Miss Maude Royden prefaced a recent address in the City Temple with the frank confession that on the "extraordinarily difficult" doctrine of the "Virgin Birth" she had not entirely made up her mind. Miss Royden, as reported in the *Christian Commonwealth*, with commendable courage gave a brief sketch of the evidence brought forward on each side as a matter of historical inquiry, and pointed out that, of the four Evangelists, only two mentioned the Virgin Birth, and that Luke's record of the nativity of Jesus could be read in a perfectly consecutive

and sensible order with complete omission of the part which states that he was born of a virgin.

* * *

The lack of the co-operation of women in the building up of Christian theology was suggested by the thesis that the Christ had to be born of a virgin, otherwise he would have inherited the entail of sin. Miss Royden asked: "Is there any mother in this congregation who dreams that if her child had by a miracle been born without a father it would have inherited nothing of ordinary human frailty? Is there a mother here who dreams that children are only the children of their fathers? The Roman Catholic Church, recognising the necessary implications of its own teaching, had proclaimed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception; but that only pushed the matter back another generation. If women had had more to do with the building up of the Church's theology, they "would never have fallen into so extravagant error as to suppose a mother had no part in the nature of her child." Many had an uneasy feeling that the doctrine arose in the minds of men out of a sense that there was something fundamentally vile about sex.



APOSTACY FROM UNITARIANISM.

III.

The apostate from Unitarianism rejecting, because he believes it impossible in his case, the invitation of Jesus to come and learn of him, which is really an invitation to learn of the light which lighteth every man coming into the world, has recourse to those statements of the miraculous which, occurring in the Scriptures, or vouched for by the decrees of ecclesiastical councils, he takes for *knowledge* in the supposed absence of the natural ground for *faith*. As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth his soul after God. Yet he could have no faith in the reality of that after which his soul panteth, unless he *knew* from the testimony of others that incomprehensible "fact" of the perfect God

and perfect man in Jesus Christ—one who is alleged to have been neither imperfect man by being perfect God, nor imperfect God by being perfect man! He cannot believe in the divine origin of the gospel of Jesus, if it was received through no more infallible means than inspiration of the same order as that known to other human beings. Yet he cannot endure to live if the gospel of Jesus be not true; therefore he will take for a known fact that Jesus was not the son of ordinary parents, but born of a virgin, a *very* Son of God, and therefore bound to *know* the truth of all he said. He could not trust the experience of an ineradicable longing as evidence of his own spiritual immortality, because it is too great a mystery and marvel. Yet he will *believe* the less because he *knows* a greater marvel (the resurrection not only of the spirit heavenly, but also of the earthly body of his Lord) upon the written testimony of others—of whose veracity, however, or of whose actual meaning even, he has had, and *could* have had, no experience whatsoever.

But did Jesus really address an invitation in such terms as those we have quoted (Matt. xii. 28-30) even to Palestinian ears, in reference to the heavy burdens of Mosaic law bound up by Scribe and Pharisee to lade men's shoulders with? Is such self-advertisement as that compatible with the very quality it advertises—meekness and lowliness in heart? We surely think that none would really expect to recommend himself by self-commendation.

And yet the answer is, that Jesus did verily utter that saying. Not actually by word of mouth perhaps. It was his works rather than himself, which, without words, spoke for him. As without speech or language "the heavens declare the glory of God" and "the firmament sheweth his handiwork," so the manner of life which Jesus lived, the manner of his teaching, and everything observable about him, commended him, without special words of commendation, as one meek and lowly. Seeking not his own will,

but the will of him that sent him, and showing in his own deportment the way of life, and true rest unto the soul wandering in search of knowledge of that way. To one man the question is, *what did Jesus say* about the proper way of life? For that one the words of Jesus are the words of the way, the words of eternal life. To another the question is, *how did Jesus teach in himself* the way—what was to be found in him whereby any one might know the way to live? To this one, Jesus himself is the way and the truth, the resurrection and the life.

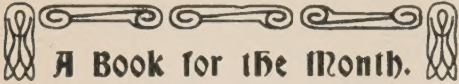
The answer just given to that question as to the authenticity of the invitation of Jesus makes it fitting to remark here upon the nature of the composition and the question of the credibility of those four main sources of our knowledge of Jesus Christ, which are known to us as the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, respectively. Each of them purports to be a collection of memoirs concerning the acts and speeches of Jesus during the brief period of his public ministry. In the case of two of them are included a few stories of his birth and childhood. The first three are generally supposed by careful scholars to have been written between forty years and a century after the death of Jesus, the fourth being written as late, perhaps, as a hundred and ten, or a hundred and twenty years later than that event; though some, it should be said, think it may have been written not much later than the other three. Even the earliest date suggested would make a lengthy interval during which reports of actions and repetitions of speech would have ample time to vary in form. Corresponding contributions in different gospels, whilst presenting, in some instances, such striking resemblance as to suggest community of source even of a documentary form for the particulars related, present in others obvious evidence, in respect of dissimilarity and other points, that the shape of the actual incident, or of the original spoken word, have been greatly modified in course of time; not merely

under the influence of accidents of memory, but even of the judgment and the taste of the evangelists themselves, of those who supplied them with their data, or of those who have subsequently edited their writings. The fourth Evangelist appears, indeed, to most candid readers, to have had a different aim to that of the other three. Their aim seems to have been to supply the quantity and quality of reliable information they conceived to be proper or requisite for every believer in what to them was the all-important fact of the Christhood of Jesus. The object of the fourth seems rather to have been to convey his own peculiar conception of the nature of the Christhood, employing for his purpose very largely fictitious narratives and fictitious speeches of his own invention. There are numerous causes for uncertainty as to the reliability of much that the gospels contain. Most people who read them studiously become convinced that they include a mixture of history, tradition and legend, and even allegory, in unascertainable proportions, that their compilers may not always have understood the real nature of some of the ingredients they accepted for simple facts, and that, in some instances, under the influence (amongst others) of their belief in the continued participation of their risen Lord in the activities of his apostles, they attributed to himself acts and speeches that belonged to the thought utterance or performance of others regarding them as having originated, in himself on account of their assumed harmonization with his wish or his intention. Even so, it is worth while to know what it is that the gospels actually tell us concerning Jesus, for they help us to form a conception of him whom they easily reveal to us to have been the grandest figure that has ever appeared in the ranks of humanity, whilst helping us to arrive at such an ideal for human character and conduct as we cannot suppose to be different from that which the Heavenly Father intended us to derive from the example and teaching, the way, the truth and the life of him who is indeed worthy

to be called alternatively the WORD of God, or the LIGHT of the world.

"The sublime figure of the Christ, portrayed to us by the First Three Evangelists, was, in a certain sense, created by the Church," says a Unitarian* among the most distinguished of living English scholars. "But," he adds, "if, in turn, we ask what was the moral and religious power by which the Church was created, only one answer is possible—it was the personality of Jesus, his faith, his truth, his love."

*J. Estlin Carpenter, D.D., D.LITT., etc., (Principal, Manchester College, Oxford, 1906-15.



A Book for the Month.

"WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

Some months ago we noticed in these columns "Studies in Christianity," by Mr. A. Clutton Brock. We would now draw attention to another new book by the same author, "What is the Kingdom of Heaven?" In the present period of reconstruction, in religion as well as other things, Mr. Brock is exercising a profound influence on thoughtful minds. The war has brought this laymen into the front rank of theologians, but though "What is the Kingdom of Heaven?" is constructive theology, it has next to nothing to say of dogmas which have chiefly occupied the minds and divided the ranks of Christianity hitherto. There is no pronouncement on the divinity of Christ, or the miracles; no discussion of the atonement or eternal punishment. "Between the Athanasian Creed and talk about the Blood of Christ, the doctrine of the Kingdom has been almost lost." What was the main theme of the teaching of Jesus? The Kingdom of Heaven. To explain and make men conscious of the Kingdom Jesus added parable to parable and precept to precept. Obviously, it was his chief desire to make the Kingdom a living reality to mankind, but it is not so with the Christian Church. Search the creeds and confessions, the cate-

chisms and articles in which the Church sets forth what is regarded as of vital importance, and you will find very little about the Kingdom, and that little not in harmony with the parables of Jesus. Mr. Brock insists that the central thought of Christ's Gospel has been neglected by the Church, and seeks to remedy this defect. He is keenly conscious of the various tendencies of modern thought, and wisely, we think, abandons the method of exegesis, quotes very little from the New Testament, and is concerned only with the spirit of Christ's great ideal in which is to be found the key to all modern problems of thought and conduct.

Mr. Brock begins by bidding us face the question, "Is the Universe a Fraud? There are certain qualities which we call virtues to which we consent entirely. Does the universe likewise consent, or is virtue peculiar to the mind of man, and the universe, from man's point of view, a fraud? We cannot surrender our own ideas of what is good. "Salvation is seeing that the universe is good and becoming a part of that goodness." To Jesus the Kingdom of God, the kingship of God, the kingship of goodness, was the greatest reality. He staked his life on it. Was he crucified in vain, and is man now crucified in vain? To see the kingdom, and to live in and for the kingdom was the only means of salvation offered by Jesus.

"Always the hope of redemption of mankind has been confused with the hope of private salvation. The error of the Church has been to give up the greater hope for the smaller." "We cannot be saved separately, but must be saved, if at all, together. Salvation is the salvation of mankind, the entry of mankind into that relation which is the kingdom of heaven." We are being brought by the study of history and the lessons of science to a sense of togetherness, and are thus led to speak of herd-instinct, but when our interdependence becomes a spiritual thing; when history and science are no longer divorced from religion, we speak of fellowship. Political action is, or should be, the effort of society to exercise its common will, not to struggle between

the conflicting wills of different classes. Where is the common will to be found? Not in self-interest or class-interest, or national-interest, for these generally conflict, but in our instinctive, though often dim appreciation of the virtue, to which, if Jesus was right, the universe consents. Too often we appeal not to the instinctive appreciation of virtue, but to self interest, and we fail. The paradox of the kingdom is that if we seek it for the sake of our salvation we are not seeking it at all. We can only seek the kingdom when we love it more than self, and are prepared to give up even life itself for the kingdom.

This is a bare outline of a stimulating book which deserves very careful study and points the way out of barren theological controversy to a great venture of faith for the betterment of man.



PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF OUR UNITARIAN FAITH.

REV. S. H. MELLONE, M.A., D.SC.

(From *The Inquirer*.)

Unitarians as a community have long been known for their readiness to analyse where they were, what they were, and what they meant. Yet often they have very imperfectly realised in their own minds what are the practical applications, in the actual world, of the faith which they profess. And this is to-day the question of questions which all churches must face.

It is a disastrous fact that the churches, *i.e.*, the organised bodies claiming to represent the Christian religion, have been helpless just at the period of the world's greatest need. It is as though they had been paralysed by the shock. This involves no reflection upon any individuals personally. Men and women have gone forth from the churches and impressed their character and ideals for good at countless points in the course of events. But during the last tragic years, the corporate bodies claiming to speak in the name of the Eternal God have had no more effect upon the course of events

than a floating cork would have upon the waves. The world has perceived this sinister fact, and the consequence is that the moral prestige and spiritual influence of these bodies was never less, within the memory of man, than to-day. If I am right in this (and I fear it is a plain matter of fact), it is a very serious thing indeed, because we are all involved, irrespective of anything we have done or left undone, and our inevitable difficulties are only increased. We are indeed free from certain definite hindrances which affect the numerically larger bodies. We are not hampered by too many traditions, and are not compelled to be for ever considering. Is it *safe* to say this, to go as far as that? But we have to meet the same challenge that is now flung down in the face of all the churches: What have you people got to help the world in its desperate plight? What message have you, what word of power that can resolve itself into deeds of power? By its answer to this question organised Unitarianism will be judged. The world will not study our literature when it wants to find out what we are doing. It will go and see.

An intelligent Presbyterian once expressed to me his view of the dogmatic system supposed to be held by that body, and he illustrated his meaning by a quaint analogy. Sometimes, when the hold of a vessel is stored with cargo, it is necessary to pack in quantities of comparatively worthless material to keep the important and valuable parts of the cargo from "shifting." He suggested that in the traditional orthodox system there was much which played the part of "stuffing," worthless in itself, but needed to keep the really important parts of the system safe! We accept the metaphor but with a very different moral. We are on the high seas. We have thrown all the "stuffing" overboard. And it is for us to see that the genuine essentials of the cargo *do not shift*. The more frankly we exercise our freedom to abandon the *accretions*, the things that have grown up round the true creed of Christ and obstructed it, the

more firmly we must grip the very heart of the meaning of the great things that remain, and show it forth to the world. What are these essentials, and how must we grip them?

The very essence of the Unitarian gospel, the foundation on which alone the whole structure is built, the binding force alone gives it whatever cohesion it possesses—is the Fatherhood of God. The Fatherhood of God—not as an object of lip-service, not as a comfortable generalisation to be listened to, or a vague theme of merely emotional assent, but as a great Ideal whose meaning demands realisation alike in personal and in social life.

What do we mean by the Fatherhood of God? We mean one vast infinite Life, Wisdom and Love in one, penetrating and seeking expression in and through every human soul throughout all time and space: a Life as boundless in its variety as the variety of Nature herself: the strength of all high human endeavour, the root of human faith, courage and love: ever various, yet ever the same, indivisible, all-inclusive. Do not tell me this is a "simple faith," as though such a phrase makes the faith true. The metaphysical subtleties of the Athanasian creed are child's play compared with this. A little historical knowledge, a little logical analysis, suffice to put those subtleties in their proper place; and when we have done that, with all the creeds, we hear the world's cry, "Show us the Father!" In these blind human struggles, show us His eternal judgments. In this persistent effort after a truth which shall make men one while it makes them free, show us his revealing wisdom: in this never-defeated devotion and loyalty to good, his redeeming love.

When a great Biblical critic and historian said that the essence of the Gospel of Jesus is *the Fatherhood of God applied to the whole of human life*, he was unconsciously defining the essence of everything that is valuable in the Unitarian faith: the Fatherhood of God, not merely believed in, but applied to the relation of man and man, class and class, nation and nation, throughout the world. In the actual world

that confronts us now, this means first of all that some of the great lessons which our people have learnt during the last four years must be acted on to-day.

The war found us with our national life largely a chaos of sectional strife between conflicting classes and interests. But all economic predictions were set at naught by the bringing up of immense latent resources, mental and moral as well as material. During the war we became one people as we had never been before; we were welded together in a wholly unprecedented way with one mind and one purpose. That purpose was victory in war. If we choose to apply the same energy, directed and concentrated with the same determination, to the purposes of human progress, happiness, welfare, what is there that we cannot accomplish? Is co-operation nothing save when war demands it? Has the future of mankind no demand to make on us for sacrifice, harmony, unity, as real as those we willingly agreed to during the war? Are we going to be such fools and blind as to let all the glorious possibilities of that community of aspirations and ideals pass away when victory is won? I, for one, cannot believe it. The greatest practical application of the Unitarian faith is to enforce the preciousness and even the necessity of those qualities of mind and character which made co-operation on such a scale a possibility and a reality during the years of war. Let us not be content to say, we did it because "the country was in danger." It was, indeed! But is it nothing to us that *humanity is in danger* and always has been? Whenever we feel that we need anything as we needed victory, we know how to get it.

The real "social problem" stands revealed. It is, what it always has been, that of making the mass of the people of every rank and class feel the need of victory over the inward enemies of true civilisation and progress, as they felt the need of victory over the external enemy in the flesh. The first, last, and worst of those inward enemies of the *spirit of gain*. A century

ago it was exalted as the sole means of securing general happiness. Adam Smith had insisted that the natural effort of every individual to better his own condition, when suffered to exert itself in freedom and security, is, alone and without assistance, capable of carrying on a society to wealth and prosperity. In the precise language of the late Henry Sidgwick, the economists of that period confidently taught that a system of "free contract among persons aiming each at the greatest pecuniary gain" was the best mode of building up the national life and dividing the produce of the workers. Pecuniary self interest did not mean simply the maintenance of self and family. It meant the desire for riches, for economic superiority over other men. The primary aim was "profit" and the ultimate aim "making a fortune." The theory on which all this is based may fairly be considered obsolete. The practice is not obsolete. Yet is the profiteer, the exploiter of others' necessities, any less a traitor to the common good, any less an enemy to human brotherhood, now, than he was in any crisis of the war?

The ideal of brotherhood is the first principle of applied Christianity. It is not hard to feel the fascination of its appealing glory—not hard to contemplate it with emotion, even ecstasy—not hard to feel that we can dedicate our lives to it. The hardness begins when we turn to the dust and heat of the common highway of life, where alone the distant glories of that ideal can begin to be real. There it is that the tasks and burdens meet us, and only a dogged wisdom and a dogged will can carry us through. The love that dreams of embracing all mankind, and has not learnt its lesson on this highway, is a delusion. The love that has learnt here what love means, has in it the promise and potency of the redemption of the world.

We read that in ancient Greece there was a religious rite under which a burning torch was borne by a long succession of runners to a sacred shrine. Each bearer, at length exhausted and fainting, handed on to his successor the

sacred flame, still living and bright. This is a parable for us. We know not the scared shrine wherein at last the light of our faith shall find its home. Let us, then, see to this—that when we can do no more, those who come after us shall receive it from us, burning with brightness undimmed.



"SPECIAL PLEADING" OF A DOCTOR OF DIVINITY.

Such the verdict on the discussion concerning the petition of a minister recently of our own fellowship for admission to the Church of Scotland. The Moderator asked for the withdrawal of the expression as one that should not be allowed. The words were withdrawn. It is well known that in the House of Commons a Member may say anything he chooses if he immediately withdraws it.

The Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church stands for liberty of conscience, and if anyone feels it to be his duty to leave the Church, and seek another, more in harmony with his religious beliefs, his brethren will only wish him God speed.

The whole discussion before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland gives food for reflection, especially with the memory of events connected with Scottish Presbyterianism, dating back for over thirty years. The Clerk of the Edinburgh Presbytery made use of an expression similar to that of the elder brother with reference to the prodigal son: "*this thy son*" ("no brother of mine.") "*This Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church!*" Still the old venom, the old arrogance, the old domineering tyranny. Like the lash of a whip across the face came words to a youth, who afterwards became one of our ministers, from one of the same ilk of orthodox champions: "You are either a downright imposter or an out-and-out hypocrite," and that because the young man had chose to read and think for himself.

Our friend had become a Trinitarian. Well, our Church includes Trinitarians among its members,

Martineau offered to orthodoxy a concession on this doctrine, and showed a way out of the Trinitarian controversy, but it was not acceptable. Many of us would be ready to accept the doctrine if we were allowed our own interpretation of it, but would that explanation satisfy the guardians of orthodox teaching? The student of Comparative Religion knows that almost every divine incarnation in the great religions is identified with the second person of the Trinity. In India at one time there were two of them incarnate at once, and the Hindu seems to have got hold of the doctrine more clearly and firmly than orthodox Christians, who decline to discuss the doctrine because it is a "mystery." What is meant by saying Christ is both perfect God and perfect man? Where is the dividing line between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God? Does the subtle film that gives the spirit of man individuality, though it is plunged in the life of God Himself, prevent the union in consciousness which makes it possible to say "I and my Father are one;" "I am the Self?" The Scriptures of the world write in the testimony that such an achievement is the height of human attainment, and that this triumphal accomplishment makes the man perfect. God is One, but He lightens every man born into the world. The light is the window, and the window is in the light; the clearer the glass, the better does the light shine through it. Where does Christ call himself the *only* Son of God? The *only begotten*, or the alone born to use a term in use in the early Church, which is equivalent to being born from the One, born of God, born again, born of water and the Spirit.

Unitarian is as wide a term as Trinitarian. There are those who are consistent Unitarians who find constant inspiration and comfort in the continued presence of the man Christ Jesus as deep and strong as any who held orthodox ideas concerning him.

The writer recently received from a minister of the Church of Scotland a letter of appreciation of the principles of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

Church, and the wish that such principles were more widely understood. It seems that battles are often won to be lost again. The Church of Scotland, liberal as it is, has yet a long way to go before it has learnt what Tolerance means. The despised Non-Subscribing Church may help to hasten that day.—ULLIN.



LESSON NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

[To be used in accordance with the Scheme of instruction for 1919, issued by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S.P.C.I.]

PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM (continued).

August 3. The Ten Virgins (its coming). Read Matthew xxv. 1-13. Key text, Matthew xxv. 13.

1. *The Story.* Jesus frequently refers to the wedding feast as a symbol of the kingdom. As the chief feature of a wedding is happiness, so he would have us feel that happiness is essential to the kingdom. He calls men to the good life, but bids us remember that goodness means happiness. At the weddings in his day there were two feasts—the first at the bride's house, after which a procession was formed, and the company marched to the bridegroom's house to celebrate by night a great feast there. Evidently the ten girls in this story were prevented by distance from going to the first feast, and their intention was to pick up the procession and join the second feast. Accordingly each took her wedding lantern, but owing to some delay in the ceremonies, five of them found they had not oil enough to last. When they had hurried and brought more oil, they were too late. The procession had passed, the door was shut and they were refused admission, because they were regarded as strangers and interlopers.

2. *The meaning (a) The Coming of the kingdom.* One of the most important things for a Christian to learn is that the kingdom of God comes in unexpected ways. It is not simply a matter of

dying and going to heaven. We cannot be worthy of heaven unless we have created a bit of heaven on earth. It is with the preparation on earth that this parable is most concerned. The kingdom comes to us here as *opportunity* to do and be good. For instance, suppose we received a good warning that someone was coming on a certain day to examine the work we were doing, and to give us a reward, we should all set to work and have something ready to show on that day. No matter how lazy, wicked and dishonest we had been before that day, or should be after it, on that day we should be everything we ought to be. Therefore such a test as that is practically useless, for it does not reveal us as we really are. But if someone were to drop on us suddenly, then the chances are that those who are generally worthless would be found worthless then. In His Kingdom God wants those who are really worthy, therefore he sends us sudden and unexpected trials, and it is for us to be so grounded in well-doing that we shall turn these trials into *opportunities*.

For instance, there are the truly generous folk who at any time are ready to be taken unawares by the appeal of someone in need, not those who carefully fix a day for a certain guest, arranging to have everything ready for that day, and feeling much annoyed either if someone other than the expected guest turns up, or even if the expected guest turns up on the wrong day. The kingdom of heaven exists whenever there is a heart always ready to love and help whoever is in need. Any day is the right day with them; any guest is the right guest. Consequently any day is the day of the kingdom, and in every one they help they are entertaining the Lord Christ.

3. *The meaning (b) Be prepared.* One mistake we must not make in reading this parable. Our Lord does not commend these wise virgins because they kept all their oil for themselves, for they were very selfish. No, that is not the point at all. The point is, that when the test came five virgins had oil and five had not. We cannot keep the spirit of the kingdom burning without

oil. The oil of the kingdom is pure and generous love. Therefore we must never miss an opportunity of laying in a fresh supply of this love. The more loving deeds we do, the more love will grow in our hearts. Moreover, we cannot be really loving unless we use our abilities to the utmost. Never lose a chance of learning something useful. For instance, there was once a boy who found himself in a position to learn something about navigation and seamanship, and he seized his opportunity. He never became a sailor, but a great public man, and apparently this particular learning was wasted. But no, for one day he was in a great storm at sea; the captain was ill; all were at their wit's end, when this man, simply a passenger, took control of the ship and brought all safe to land. The opportunity came to do a great good, and he was able to seize it because he had not missed his opportunity to learn.

August 10. *The parable of the talents (its coming).* Read Matthew xxv. 14-30. Key text, Matt. xxv. 21.

1. *The Talents.* A very important point is made in this parable, namely, that God Himself equips us with the material for making the Kingdom of Heaven. We are not born corrupt and helpless, but in the words of Wordsworth, we come to earth "trailing clouds of glory." We are His children from the very first. *For elder scholars.* Emphasize this point in connection with the orthodox doctrine of original sin, according to which "there is no health in us," and we can do nothing good of ourselves. For Jesus the kingdom of God is not in some remote, future place, but in our hearts from the very first, to be developed and realized in such a way that earth will be linked up with heaven.

2. *The use of the Talents.* Although we begin our life on earth with heavenly talents, yet we fail all too often to employ them. Why? usually because, like the wicked servant in the parable we do not measure them right. We think that only those talents are worth having which can bring us money or high position, and therefore if we are weak and humble, having no "wealth

or learning," we feel discouraged, and make no effort to use what abilities we have, whilst if we are smart, and clever, and strong, we misuse our abilities to tyrannize over others, and get praise, profit and luxury for ourselves. The wicked servant in the parable accordingly refused to do anything with his one talent. He was quite wrong, because in the first place these talents or abilities, whether great or small, are not our own to do as we please, but are held in trust by us from God, and our duty is to employ them in His service. In the second place, as the key text shows, we are all the same in the eyes of God, whether our talents are few or many, our one sole purpose being to prove to God that we can be faithful in the small things of earth, and therefore worthy of the great things of heaven.

3. *What is a Talent?* I do not mean what it is as a piece of money, but what our Lord intends us to mean by it. A talent is *any* gift we have for making the world better. Everybody has some such talent. One man's may be in the direction of great public services, another's of art, music, or poetry, another's of plain, honest workmanship, another's of tender kindness, and so on. It matters not whether we get into the newspapers or not, whether we are great scholars or unlearned men. Any gift we have for making even the least person in our midst better and happier is a talent we must employ, and the employment of which puts all on the same level as "good and faithful servants." What makes the kingdom of God is harmony, and as in a piece of music, every note is of profound importance, so in a home, a city, or a nation, every talent is important. The big drum makes most noise in a band, but a band of nothing but big drums would be too awful for anything. The piccolo makes scarcely any noise, but its little piping note is needed to make the harmony complete.

August 17. *The Judgment (its coming)*. Read Matthew xxv. 31-46. Key text, xxv. 40.

1. *The Separation.* We must not lay too great stress upon the separation between the sheep and the goats, as if it implies eternal heaven for the saved, eternal hell for the damned. The whole spirit of Jesus' teaching is against such a view. The kingdom he preached could not be complete until all men were saved. But, of course, before that great day can arrive, there will be frequent siftings between those whose lives lie heavenward, and those whose lives create the misery of hell. These siftings are always going on, both in this life and in the life beyond, those on the right hand going a stage higher, those on the left hand being brought down, so that after being purged of sin they may begin again. Jesus' point is, that the King of Heaven puts us to a test before we can be accounted worthy of His kingdom, and therefore that we must not delude ourselves, and think that we can go on for as long as we like, just frittering our lives away in sin, folly, and selfishness. The unjust man often seems to flourish, whilst the just man suffers. But this does not mean that God does not care. The time for sifting will come; eternal God will choose those who are fit for His eternal kingdom and those who are not, and therefore the profit and pain of earth do not count compared with whether we are just or unjust. God knows our hearts, and God alone matters, for all power is His.

2. *The test.* The test applied runs contrary to all the accepted orthodox notions. The kingdom of heaven does not ask "Do you believe in the Trinity? Do you accept all the teachings of orthodoxy? Are you respectable? Have you a good balance in the bank, and plenty of good clothes? No, He asks none of these questions. He just says "welcome" to those who have passed the test of love; and He leaves no doubt what He means by love. It means that the blessed ones did kind, tender, and thoughtful deeds to Him. Yes, to Him, for they did kind, tender, and thoughtful deeds to all those men, women and children who were in need. Since all these are God's children, anything done to them is done

to God. Just as a mother blesses anyone who is kind to her child, so God blesses anyone who is kind to His children. It is no use our waiting until we can see God to show how much we love Him. We can see God's children here and now, and anything done to them is done to God; if we love them we love God. Tolstoi has a beautiful story about an old man who longed to see Jesus, the God in man, so that he might show how much he loved him. The desired vision never came, but whilst he waited he performed several acts of genuine kindness to those less fortunate than himself. He did not realize the full meaning of his acts until, as he lay on his death bed, bemoaning his fate at never seeing a revelation of God, the blessed words came to him, "Inasmuch as ye did unto one of these least, ye did it unto me." (Key text).

August 24, Review.

August 31st. Parables Against the Pharisees. 1. *New wine and old wine-skins.* Read Matt. ix. 14-17. Key text, Matthew ix. 17.

1. *The Pharisees.* For a first-rate description of the Pharisees read Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter's "Life in Palestine when Jesus lived." As we all know, the Jews regarded the Law of Moses as their great spiritual birthright; but, says Dr. Carpenter, "some were more faithful to it than others, observed it more strictly, and embraced its leading principles with more ardour. Such men were naturally noticed by their neighbours; the care they took in avoiding pollution and keeping away from everything heathen, could not be altogether hidden. First it was said of one, and then of another, 'How pious he is.' [N.B.—'Pharisee' means 'Pious.'] By degrees this epithet came to be attached to all who took special pains to make their life conform to the demands of the law, and there was a recognized class who went by the name of 'the Pious.' They did not differ from other people in their belief; they held the same doctrines, they obeyed the same ordinances, but they cared much more for their religion, and the only way they had of showing this was by a more rigid fulfilment of the law." The one serious

fault of the Pharisees was that they came to regard external observances, such for example, as frequent washings and fastings as religion itself, and believed that the more they multiplied such observances the more religious they were. Jesus soon found himself in opposition to them, because he taught that the essence of religion and the Law of Moses was a good heart. With a good heart we should be bound to fulfil the whole law and the prophets; without a good heart our obedience to the law is worthless. For instance, take "the story of the girl who trod on a loaf." This little girl was beautifully washed and dressed, and so anxious was she to keep herself clean that she actually threw a loaf (meant for a starving old woman) into a muddy pool so as to afford herself a stepping stone. She had a clean body but a foul heart. A clean heart would have thought first of the old woman's need, and risked getting soiled boots and frock for the sake of doing good.

2. *Jesus and Fasting.*—The Pharisees were inclined to favour John the Baptist because he kept much nearer to their rules and ceremonies, e.g., he urged his disciples to fast. Jesus himself had no objection to fasting. Indeed he looked upon it as one means of keeping the body in subjection for the soul's good. But unless fasting were done definitely for the sake of good, he saw no good purpose in it. Thus, there was no need for him and his disciples to fast. Their whole lives were devoted to good, and they were too happy in this brave, good life to bother about fasting. The disciples had Jesus with them, and consequently fasting was out of place. Time enough for them to fast, said Jesus, when their happy association with him was broken. Moreover, as Jesus shows elsewhere, it was supremely ridiculous to ask happy, active men, who frequently went hungry, and never knew where their next meal was coming from, to make a point of fasting. Fasting is much more suitable for lazy, prosperous, over-fed people.

3. *New wine in old bottles.* See key text. As a matter of physical fact, new wine was not placed in old bottles

The bottles were made of leather, and they grew hard and stiff with age. Consequently new wine, with fermentation still going on needs new, supple leather bottles which would expand with the fermentation. The hard bottles would burst. In the same way Jesus refused to make his new, spiritual teaching fit into the old rules and ceremonies of the Pharisees. For their rules and ceremonies were hard and and could not expand, whilst Jesus' teaching was full of life. Therefore he demanded room for it to grow. *For elder scholars*, insist on the value of non-subscription as the only basis for Christianity. Dogmas, doctrines, and ceremonial are hard and fixed, and cannot possibly retain the eternally new spirit of Christ. True Christians must be both zealous for their Lord and broadminded and progressive towards the life and thought about them.

E. H. P.



Reports.

The Association.—The Annual Meeting of the Association was held on Tuesday, 17th June, at 2 o'clock, in the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast. The President, Rev. G. L. Phelps, after hymn and Scripture reading constituted the meeting with prayer. The roll was called by the Secretary, Rev. H. J. Rossington. There was a good attendance of ministers, but the attendance of elders was very poor. The President then asked for the appointment of a successor, and Rev. E. H. Pickering was unanimously elected. Mr. Pickering returned thanks for the honour done to him. Rev. H. J. Rossington was elected Secretary and Rev. J. A. Kelly, Treasurer. The report of the General Purposes Committee was accepted. Mr. Kelly presented the Statement of Accounts, and the Committee was re-appointed. Rev. J. H. Bibby presented the report of the Orphan Society. He drew attention to the fact that the attendances of Governors had been very bad, and that two meetings had recently failed for

want of a quorum. He moved the adoption of the report. The following were elected new Governors, viz.—Mr. S. Magill, Rev. M. Watkins, Rev. D. J. Williams, Mr. W. M'Robert, and Rev. Percival Godding.

A long discussion took place upon the subject of illegitimacy. The Governors were instructed to take action in the matter. The thanks were tendered to minister and Committee of the First Church for kindly lending the Church to the Association. Some routine business was done, and then the minutes having been read, the President closed the meeting with the benediction.

* *

Ballyclare.—Under the auspices of the local branch of the Comrades of the Great War, a United Service of Thanksgiving was held on Sunday in the Presbyterian Church. The Rev. P. Godding, Commander of the Branch, was the preacher selected; others who took part were the Rector, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist ministers. The church was packed to overflowing, more than 800 being in the building, including about 130 "comrades." The Orpheus Male Choir led the Service of Praise, assisted by members of all the Church choirs in the town. Mr. Godding's eloquent and impressive discourse was heard with wrapt attention. He referred to "our heroes." They had died for the great Divine Humanity, and we thanked God for the wonderful unselfishness that prompted their sacrifices. He believed that those who would be spared for a few years would see the dawn of a new order of things. At present there were unmistakeable signs of unhealthy reaction, but these would not last. The very foundations of our boasted civilisation had not been just shaken, but irrevocably altered. How altered; how nearly the new foundation would resemble Christ, which is the only true foundation for the nation's life remains to be seen. The next few years will see the ushering in of the world's dangerous but wonderful and God-inspired age of adolescence. A collection was taken in aid of a fund for tending the graves of all those comrades who are

buried in local cemeteries. The significance and promise of this new fellowship, which is unsectarian, can be best calculated by those who know the conditions in North Ireland.

* *

Downpatrick.—In Downpatrick First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Church there was a beautiful children's flower service on Sunday. A simple anthem, "The Earth is the Lord's," was rendered by the children; eight of the elder boys took the collection; and the minister, Rev. Ralph Philipson, B.A., gave a suitable address, taking as his text, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

The congregation met at a social gathering in the Assembly Hall on Wednesday evening, 25th June, and in spite of the fact that the members, together with the other Protestants of the town and district, were in preparation for the united excursion, there was a large attendance. Plants had been very kindly lent by Dr. Nolan, and with the table floral decorations, so tastefully arranged by Miss Jordan, the hall looked quite gay. Tea was served between 7 and 8, during which three of the elder scholars, viz., Misses Mabel and Annie Dickson and Marjorie Stewart, played pianoforte solos. At 8 o'clock Mr. S. C. N. Lowry took the chair, and after a few appropriate remarks called on the artistes in his usual happy manner. Mr. Edward Hughes, who has a sweet baritone voice, ably rendered "In an old-fashioned town," and "Two eyes of grey," and was encored. Miss Lily Irvine, of Rathmullan, who is ever popular in Downpatrick and district, sang "Absent" and "Land of Hope and Glory," she too being recalled. Madame Bella Ewen (Mrs. Tom Pickering), a rich contralto, delighted the audience with "Good morning, Brother Sunshine," "The Little Damsel," and "The Gleaners' Slumber Song." Miss Annie and Mabel Dickson were at their best in a pianoforte duet. Very pleasing items were two fancy dances by the children. Miss Gladys Stewart was in perfect style in the Highland fling, while Misses Eileen Keeler and Kathleen

Dickson were most graceful in a very artistic fan dance. Miss Crickard was the accompanist, and as usual was a splendid support to all the artistes.

A deputation on the question of ministerial stipends had been asked for by the congregation. Mr. J. M. Andrews, of Comber, was unfortunately unable to be present, but sent a letter strongly urging the necessity of increased financial support from the laymen. Rev. Alfred Turner, the Moderator, made a stirring appeal, and Rev. D. J. Williams related what had been done by his own congregation.

At the end of the proceedings a vote of thanks was moved to all who had helped towards so successful a gathering, and it was reported that during the year nine new names appeared on the stipend list, and four families had rejoined, while there were seventy-four junior members.

* *

Killinchy.—The Sunday School Anniversary and Flower Services were held this year under unfavourable climatic conditions, on June 22nd. Heavy rains at the time of morning service affected the attendance considerably. Considering the adverse conditions the attendance was as good as could be expected. The choir and scholars led the singing with appropriate hymns and an anthem prepared for the occasion, and the minister preached suitable sermons morning and evening. The Church was decorated by the ladies with June flowers, which gave brightness and cheerfulness to the services. The collections on behalf of the Sunday School funds amount to the sum of £6 rs. 9d.

The Annual Walking of the Sunday School took place on the following Saturday, June 28th. Teachers and scholars assembled in the Lecture Hall at 4 o'clock, when cakes and lemonade and other good things were discussed, to the evident enjoyment of all present. Afterwards the school formed in procession and marched to Templebrook Valley lawn, kindly lent for the occasion by the Misses Watson, where the children engaged in games to their hearts content. During the evening

a large number of friends and young people gathered, and the crowd presented an exceedingly animated and happy appearance. We were favoured with an ideal afternoon for out-door enjoyment.

* *

Larne and Kilwaughter.—For many years previous to the war it was the custom to have a summer excursion in which not only the Sunday scholars in connection with the above, but members of the congregation and some others joined, to Garron Tower, once or twice to Templepatrick, and once to Castle Dobbs. This laudable custom was interrupted by the war, but was resumed by a very enjoyable trip to Magheramorne demesne on July 4 by train at 1 o'clock. The weather was splendid, and a goodly contingent, including mothers and children in arms, accompanied or followed the young folks and their teachers, and assembled with them on what old Chaucer would have termed the "Pleasaunce" behind the Magheramorne Mansion, which for a time was set open that all and sundry might ramble through and enjoy the magnificent view to be obtained from the windows. Substantial refreshments were served once and again, Mr. Pullen, with the assistance of "George," catering and seeing that none sat (or stood) unserved. For some hours games, races, etc., were indulged in by the young folk, under the direction of their teachers—Messrs. Wright, M'Keown, and Canning, while their elders luxuriated in the sunshine and enjoyed the pine scented breezes so suggestive of Bournemouth, the glen (abounding in ferns) affording a welcome retreat to those overheated in the chase, or by simply lounging or strolling about. Needless to say, the other teachers—The Misses Bailie, Beth M'Ninch, A. M'Kee, J. Bryans, Nance M'Keown, R. Crawford, M. Steele, Miss Blanche Gingles, and Miss Beggs, Andrew M'Keown—were unsparing in their efforts to promote the success of the gathering and the happiness and comfort of all. The minister gratefully recognises the kindness of Messrs. Arthur Wallace and James Nelson, of

Moordyke, in conveying young people of the Kilwaughter Sunday School down to the railway station. It may be further noted that the services in the Old Meeting House on the last Sunday in June and on the first Sunday in July were suitable to the occasion in music, sermon, etc., and that in commemoration of the fallen a short Litany, composed by the late Rev. Dr. Hunter, was read.

* *

Remonstrant Synod of Ulster.—The Annual Meeting of the Synod was held on Tuesday, 17th June, at 12 o'clock, in the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast. Synod was constituted by the outgoing Moderator, Rev. G. Slipper, who led the meeting in praise and prayer. The Clerk called the roll. Most of the ministers were present, but there was a very poor attendance of elders. Mr. Slipper then called upon the Synod to appoint his successor, and the Rev. J. G. Davies, of Banbridge, was unanimously appointed. Mr. Davies thanked the Synod heartily for the honour they had done him, and the Synod proceeded to the appointment of Clerk and Assistant Clerk. The Rev. John Barron was elected Clerk and Rev. M. Watkins Assistant Clerk. The Revs. J. Kennedy and H. M'Gowan were asked to sit and deliberate. Mr. Kennedy replied, and intimated that he would ask the Synod to appoint Mr. William M'Robert as Trustee of his commutation money in place of Henry M'Robert, deceased. The usual vote of thanks to the Congregation of the First Church for kindly granting the use of their Church to the Synod. Mr. Kelly presented the Report of the Finance Committee, and moved its adoption at the same time, speaking well of the Sustentation Fund. He recommended that the best disbursement that was possible should be made from the Fund in view of increased cost of living. The Synod agreed. Mr. William M'Robert was thanked for the very special attention he continues to give to this Fund, and to Rev. J. A. Kelly for his services. Mr. Kelly and Mr. Slipper were thanked for their services as Auditors, and the

were re-appointed to the office. The Finance Committee was appointed. The report of the Clerkship Fund was adopted. Mr. William M'Robert was appointed a Co-Trustee, with Rev. A. Turner, of the Clerkship Fund. The Report of the General Purposes Committee was presented, and adopted, and the Committee for the current year appointed. With regard to the Ballymena property, it was stated by Mr. Kelly that the property would require to be repaired. There is a small balance in hand. The minutes were then read by the Clerk, and the Moderator pronounced the benediction.

* *

Unity Guild.—The June outing of the Unity Guild took the form of a Picnic to Braniel Hill, and it will always be remembered by those present as the

day on which the Peace Treaty was signed. Whilst having tea in glorious sunshine, it was with feelings of thankfulness and joy that we heard the sound of the horns conveying to our listening ears the glad news that once again peace holds her gentle sway. It is to be regretted that the Guild was not more representative in numbers, as a very enjoyable afternoon was spent by the members present.

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